

ERNEST J. ISTOOK, JR.  
5TH DISTRICT, OKLAHOMA

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
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TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY, AND  
INDEPENDENT AGENCIES  
LABOR, HHS, AND EDUCATION  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY  
ASSISTANT MAJORITY WHIP

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-3605**

October 27, 2003

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istook@mail.house.gov

Dear fellow Oklahoman:

Knowing you want to stay abreast of progress in area transportation, I'm enclosing three items that are noteworthy.

The first is excerpts from my recent presentation to Oklahoma contractors, telling them some very welcome news: In addition to not being a donor state this fiscal year, Oklahoma will be the number one state per capita in federal highway project earmarks, and also tops in general transit funding, and in other categories. This is due to the appropriations bill I put-together and passed through the House of Representatives. I'm working to maintain Oklahoma's best-in-the-nation funding position in the House-Senate conference on the transportation spending bill.

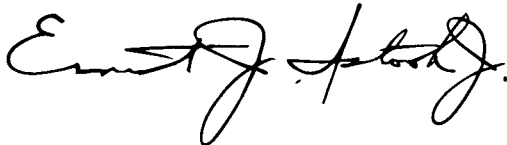
Second is a joint letter from me and Randy Hume of the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority, cementing our mutual commitment to how we can best study options for local transportation. COTPA already has the funds it needs and intends to use for such a study, which will include light-rail as among the options, without pre-judging it. Because a light-rail system would likely cost \$50-million to \$100-million per mile in mostly-local dollars, and require hefty all-local annual operating subsidies, it's important that all other options be a serious part of any study. This study is expected to cost under a half-million dollars.

Third is a letter I received from the Federal Transit Administration, evaluating the recent request for \$9-million for a light-rail-only study. FTA is the federal agency overseeing all such projects, and local officials had agreed that FTA should be asked to evaluate that request, to lend its expertise. FTA relates that a light-rail focus is premature and raises questions about whether our area has the need and the financial capacity for such an investment. FTA suggests the approach that Mr. Hume and I both seek to follow, namely to evaluate all transportation-improvement options rather than focusing on just one.

Common-sense transportation improvements will also enhance economic development, especially when we invest in modes that move goods as well as people.

I hope you find these items useful, and I look forward to continuing work and cooperation to improve central Oklahoma.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ernest J. Istook, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Ernest J. Istook, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Encl: Istook remarks from Oct. 24, 2003 meeting with AGC  
Oct 27, 2003 Istook/Hume letter to OKC Chamber  
October 24, 2003 letter from FTA to Istook  
Oklahoma FY04 Highway and Transit Funding

# **EXCERPTS FROM CONGRESSMAN ERNEST ISTOOK'S SPEECH TO OKLAHOMA CONTRACTORS OCT. 24, 2003**

Let me tell you some good news about Oklahoma.

Everyone knows we've been a donor state for far too long, paying more in highway taxes than we get back from Washington. The delegation worked hard several years ago, and dramatically improved the portion we get back from Washington.

Now, a permanent fix requires legislation from the authorizing committees. That's the committee that Senator Jim Inhofe chairs in the Senate, and the committee where John Sullivan and Brad Carson are members in the House. So we're looking to them to help change the formula.

But meantime, we can get additional funds through the annual appropriations bills, even without fixing the formula itself. And that's where I come in, chairing the Transportation and Treasury Appropriations Subcommittee in the House.

So here is the great news, about what is in the House-passed transportation spending bill:

First--In this current fiscal year, FY2004, Oklahoma overall will get back more highway dollars than we pay into the federal treasury.

Second—In the road projects category, Oklahoma will get more funds per person than any other state in the country. We're number one. In fact, the extra \$32-million in highway project money (over and beyond the \$447-million in formula dollars) is more than the last three years combined. And I've provided help not only for the Fifth District, but across the state as well.

Third—In the general transit category, the extra \$26-million in special dollars (over and beyond formula dollars) again makes us number one per capita, it's more than during the last three years combined.

Fourth—When you add together all the project designations, including aviation, the \$64-million in earmarks is once again number one per person. The only way to see it differently would be to count the so-called "new starts" projects, but they require mega-million special local taxes and contracts.

Fifth—We're not finished yet. In the House-Senate conference, I'm optimistic that there will be additional dollars to help Oklahoma's transportation. So not only are we number one, but we're still climbing!

Now, we need your help. We've got federal commitment; we need more state and local commitment. Too often, some at the state and local level have bemoaned that we don't get enough federal help. Unfortunately, that can divert attention from asking whether we are doing all we can at the state and local level. I urge state and local officials to show the same commitment and effort that I've made to improve our roads and highways in Oklahoma through their efforts, not just asking for more federal money. A network of good roads not only lets people go to and from work, and moves the goods, but it also attracts businesses that rely on those roads. It brings the economic development we need.

October 27, 2003

Mr. Dean Schirf  
Vice-President, Government Relations  
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce  
123 Park Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK 73102

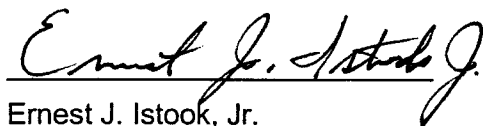
Dear Mr. Schirf:

Enclosed please find a letter dated October 24, 2003, from the Federal Transit Administrator addressing a potential study of light rail, as well as other fixed guideway transportation options for central Oklahoma. When the Chamber presented its request, it was agreed the request should be reviewed by the FTA, and the letter reflects their analysis.

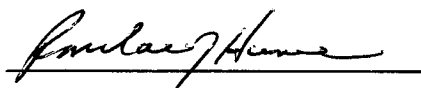
To help encourage common sense cooperation, we suggest the following principles in studying our transportation needs:

- COTPA has, within its current formula allocation, enough funding to carry out the initial study of 'fixed guideway' transportation options in central Oklahoma, at an approximate estimated cost of \$800,000;
- Such a study should examine the full array of transportation options, not limited to light rail but including bus service, High-Occupancy Vehicle routes (HOV), and other road and highway alternatives;
- It is premature at this time to focus on light rail system costs, planning or other specific steps until these alternatives and central Oklahoma's transportation patterns are studied to reflect an updated understanding of current and future transportation needs;
- Decisions on our most cost-effective transportation infrastructure should correspond to central Oklahoma's transportation and transit needs.

We're in a position to assure full federal and local cooperation in examining all alternatives. We need a clear view of transportation needs and options in central Oklahoma, before we can make choices, and then develop a blueprint to guide us.



Ernest J. Istook, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Randall J. Hume  
Administrator, COTPA



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Transit  
Administration**

Administrator

400 Seventh St., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

October 24, 2003

The Honorable Ernest J. Istook, Jr.  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Treasury and Independent Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-6027

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has reviewed the request by the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce for \$9 million in New Starts funding for a systems planning study and subsequent alternatives analysis of fixed guideway options in metropolitan Oklahoma City. We are pleased that there is a local interest in improving transit for Oklahoma City, particularly from the private sector, which can play an invaluable role in supporting transit. Nevertheless, we have concerns about the use of New Starts funding for planning studies and, more particularly, the ability of a Central Oklahoma light rail project to effectively compete for New Starts funding.

Oklahoma City, like other urban areas, receives formula funds that can and should be used for the purpose of conducting studies such as the one described. The intent of the New Starts program is to provide capital assistance for the design and construction of new – or the extension of existing – fixed guideway transit systems. However, both the FTA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provide planning assistance to metropolitan planning organizations through formula grant programs. Moreover, additional funding for transportation planning activities is available through the myriad of flexible funding opportunities available under the FHWA Federal-aid program. If, indeed, a regional rail system is a priority of state and local officials, ample resources are available under existing Federal programs to fund the planning of such a system.

Furthermore, given the demographics and scale of development of Oklahoma City, it would appear that less costly transit options might be more appropriate for the city to pursue. FTA has a rigorous rating and evaluation process that is used to recommend New Starts funding for projects. That process puts emphasis on the project's cost-effectiveness, transit-supportive land use, and the financial capacity of the project sponsor to build and operate the project and the future transit system. We do not have sufficient information to form an opinion about Central Oklahoma's transit-supportive land use or its financial capacity to support light rail at this time. As a general rule, however, new fixed guideway systems like light rail are most cost-effective in metropolitan areas with corridors that currently have high volumes of travelers using buses and that are projected to have increased travel demand in the future. These high volume transit corridors are generally found in communities with large central business districts, compact development, and large populations. Oklahoma City does not appear

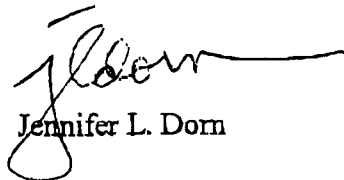
to have these attributes. According to FTA, the average population and downtown employment of metropolitan areas currently advancing New Starts projects through preliminary engineering and final design is 2.6 million people and 175,000 employees. The population of the Oklahoma City urbanized area, by comparison, is approximately 800,000 people and its downtown employment is 23,000.

While metropolitan area size is not the only factor in determining the potential demand for fixed guideway transit, it does strongly indicate that it is premature for Oklahoma City to focus exclusively on such an investment. I would urge the Central Oklahoma Transit and Parking Authority (COTPA) to utilize the planning resources described above to undertake a comprehensive study of the full range of potential solutions to their transportation needs. This should include an analysis of how regional bus service might be improved to meet these needs. These steps should and typically do occur prior to the submission of proposals to fund the design and construction of a major capital investment such as rail transit.

Finally, I would encourage the Chamber to work through the metropolitan planning process to advance its priorities. We believe the Chamber and other private sector sponsors have an important role to play in the development of strategies to address transportation problems in urban and rural areas throughout the country, and we look forward to advancing public-private partnerships in transportation project development.

Please keep me informed about transportation planning activities in the Greater Oklahoma City area. If you have any questions regarding the funding of transportation planning activities in Central Oklahoma, please feel free to contact me at (202) 366-4040.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Dorn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jennifer L. Dorn

# Oklahoma FY04 Highway and Transit Funding

**Total Oklahoma FY04 Highway and Transit Funds \$526,278,623**

## **FY04 Oklahoma Highway Funds**

	<u>Total Highway Funds</u>	\$479,085,000
	<u>Formula Funding</u> <sup>1</sup>	\$446,969,000
	<u>Earmarks</u> <sup>2</sup>	\$32,116,000
City of Vinita road construction for industrial park		\$100,000
Broken Bow rail spur		\$750,000
Thackerville, I-35 interchange		\$1,000,000
Rockford road, Ardmore		\$700,000
Rogers Lane I-44 Interchange, Lawton		\$1,000,000
City of Seminole US 377 upgrades and spur creation		\$2,000,000
City of Wewoka US 270 and adjoining streets		\$250,000
Oklahoma City I-40 crosstown expressway		\$13,266,000
Luthur area I-44 exit ramp		\$2,000,000
Lake Stanley Draper road improvements		\$300,000
Shawnee MacArthur and Airport Drive intersection		\$750,000
National Steel Bridge Alliance		\$750,000
Oklahoma City NE 23rd Street improvements		\$250,000
Osage County US 60 improvements, Pawhuska to Vinita		\$2,000,000
Oklahoma Transportation Center		\$2,000,000
Tulsa I-44 improvements		\$5,000,000

## **FY04 Oklahoma Transit Funds**

	<u>Total Transit Funds</u>	\$47,193,623
	<u>Formula Funding</u> <sup>3</sup>	\$20,731,623
	<u>Earmarks</u> <sup>2</sup>	\$26,462,000
ODOT Transit Programs Division		\$6,250,000
Norman CART/UOO		\$1,750,000
Oklahoma Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC)		\$6,000,000
Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority		\$1,820,000
Northern Oklahoma Regional Multimodal Transportation System		\$5,500,000
Tulsa Transit Bus Replacement Program		\$4,500,000
Kibios Area Transit System (KATS) for maintenance facility and vehicles.		\$642,000

1 Estimated Obligation Limitation

2 Contract Authority

3 Does not include Transit Planning and Research funds



**OKLAHOMA HIGHWAY & TRANSIT PROJECTS (FY 1999-2004)**

**FY 1999**

<b>\$0</b>	<b>TOTAL HIGHWAY PROJECTS</b>	\$5,000,000	Statewide bus facilities & buses
		<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>TOTAL TRANSIT PROJECTS</b>

**FY 2000**

<b>\$0</b>	<b>TOTAL HIGHWAY PROJECTS</b>	\$5,000,000	Statewide bus facilities & buses
		<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>TOTAL TRANSIT PROJECTS</b>

**FY 2001**

\$1,000,000	Intelligent Transportation Systems	\$2,500,000	Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority
\$4,200,000	Relocation of MacArthur Blvd	\$2,500,000	Oklahoma City Bus Transfer Center
\$ 400,000	Tulsa-Sapulpa Union Railroad Overpass	\$4,000,000	Statewide bus facilities & buses
	Oakridge Elementary School		
<b>\$5,600,000</b>	<b>TOTAL HIGHWAY PROJECTS</b>	<b>\$9,000,000</b>	<b>TOTAL TRANSIT PROJECTS</b>

**FY 2002**

\$3,000,000	Oklahoma Statewide	\$4,000,000	Central Oklahoma transit facilities
\$1,500,000	US 412 Overpass @ I-44	\$3,000,000	Oklahoma Dept. of transportation
\$ 250,000	Great Lakes recreation area traffic study	\$5,000,000	Oklahoma Transit Assoc.
\$1,000,000	Midwest City downtown revitalization		
\$ 200,000	Navajo Gateway		
\$5,500,000	I-40 crosstown expressway		
<b>\$11,450,000</b>	<b>TOTAL HIGHWAY PROJECTS</b>	<b>\$12,000,000</b>	<b>TOTAL TRANSIT PROJECTS</b>

**FY 2003**

\$2,750,000	OK Statewide ITS	\$2,500,000	Central Oklahoma Transportation & Parking Authority (COPTA)
\$3,000,000	I-40 Crosstown Realignment	\$5,000,000	Oklahoma Transit Association - Bus and Bus Facilities
\$1,200,000	I-235 Harrison Avenue offramp reconstruction & Walnut Ave. relocation	\$1,000,000	Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority (MTTA)
\$1,500,000	US-287 Corridor Development, OK	\$2,500,000	Central Oklahoma Transportation & Parking Authority (COPTA)
\$500,000	I-40 and Avenue F City Ramp Project, OK		
\$350,000	OK Transportation Center Improvements		
\$1,250,000	Tulsa Trail System, Broken Arrow, OK		
\$750,000	I-44 Interchanges at State Hwy 51 and US 169, Tulsa, OK		
<b>\$11,300,000</b>	<b>TOTAL HIGHWAY PROJECTS</b>	<b>\$11,000,000</b>	<b>TOTAL TRANSIT PROJECTS</b>

**FY 2004**

\$100,000	Road construction for industrial park for City of Vinita	\$642,000	Kibios Area Transit System (KATS) for maintenance facility and vehicles.
\$750,000	Broken Bow Rail Spur	\$6,250,000	Oklahoma Department of Transportation Transit Programs Division
\$1,000,000	Thackerville, OK I-35 Interchange	\$1,750,000	CART/UOO, Norman, OK Buses and Bus Facilities
\$700,000	Rockford Road, Ardmore, OK	\$6,000,000	Jobs Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC), OK
\$1,000,000	Rogers Lane I-44 Interchange, Lawton, OK	\$1,820,000	Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority (COPTA)
\$2,000,000	City of Seminole, OK	\$5,500,000	Northern Oklahoma Regional Multimodal Transportation System
\$250,000	City of Wewoka, OK	\$4,500,000	Tulsa, OK Transit Bus Replacement Program
\$10,000,000	I-40 Crosstown Expressway		
\$2,000,000	I-44 Exit off/on Ramp in Luther area		
\$300,000	Lake Stanley Draper Road Improvements, OK		
\$750,000	MacArthur and Airport Drive Intersection Improvements, Shawnee, OK		
\$750,000	National Steel Bridge Alliance		
\$250,000	NE 23 <sup>rd</sup> Street between Lincoln and I-35, OKC		
\$3,266,000	Oklahoma County I-40 ITS		
\$2,000,000	US 60, Osage County, OK		
\$2,000,000	Oklahoma Transportation Center		
\$5,000,000	I-44 widening and construction on Arkansas River east to Yale Ave., Tulsa, OK		
<b>\$32,116,000</b>	<b>TOTAL HIGHWAY PROJECTS</b>	<b>\$26,462,000</b>	<b>TOTAL TRANSIT PROJECTS</b>